

**Board of Forestry and Fire Protection
Range Management Advisory Committee (RMAC)**

**Minutes
August 17, 2005**

Attending:

RMAC:

Representing

Ken Zimmerman	California Cattlemen's Association
Mike Connor	Public Member
Clancy Dutra	California Farm Bureau Federation
Henry Giacomini	California Farm Bureau Federation
J.R. McCollister	Public Member
Chuck Pritchard	California Assoc. of Resource Conservation Districts
Scott Carnegie	California Forestry Association
Leonard Hale	Watershed Fire Council of Southern California
Mel Thompson	California Wool Growers Association
Jeff Stephens	CDF / RMAC Executive Secretary

Members of the Public:

Wendy West	UC Cooperative Extension
Mary Huggins	CDF
Brian Garrett	USFS
Virginia Mahacek	Private Consultant

Items 1, 2, & 3, Call to Order and Introductions:

Ken Zimmerman called the meeting to order August 17, 2005 at 8:00 A.M. Introductions of all present were made. He then asked for a review and approval of the June minutes for the Vegetation Management/Fire Focus Group and full RMAC meetings. Corrections were noted and minutes were approved with changes by unanimous vote.

Item 5, Setting Priorities for Focus Groups:

Vegetation Management/Fire Focus Group: J.R. McCollister restated the objectives that he will pursue as follows:

1. Continue to monitor the RMAC report on VMP recommendations to the RPC and ultimately the Board. Also the Focus Group will actively pursue the recommendations with the Board.

2. Stay current and monitor the Department's review and update of the California Fire Plan.
3. Stay current and monitor the Department's progress on the rewrite of the VMP EIR.

Mr. McCollister asked that Tom Hoffman be invited to the next RMAC meeting and provide an update on the Fire Plan. Jeff Stephens agreed to make the arrangements.

Range Lands Focus Group:

Chuck Pritchard stated he will pursue the issue of over regulation / red tape that was the subject of the meeting with Secretary Chrisman. Ken Zimmerman noted that the Secretary is involved in a process to address burdensome regulation, and that the same concerns expressed by RMAC have been heard from other sources.

Mr. Pritchard also noted the problem that exists with State and Federal agencies acquiring land for conservation purposes but there is no management expertise present within the agency for future management. Mike Connor agreed and cited the example of Conservancy lands that have been turned over to the DFG. Henry Giacomini stated that the Certified Range Manager (CRM) process is different than that of a Registered Professional Forester (RPF) and that we probably do not want them treated the same. Other examples were noted by RMAC members Mike Connor and Chuck Pritchard with Department of Water & Power and BLM where no range management skills exist for the management of range lands. Ken Zimmerman mentioned that he toured the Hearst Ranch which is under the Nature Conservancy. However, they do have the expertise on staff. Ken Zimmerman recommended that Wolfgang Pittroff be consulted on the matter in regards to the Prescribed Herbivory Handbook, and that Eric Huff with the Board be consulted as well.

Water Focus Group:

Henry Giacomini identified two items for Water Focus Group Objectives:

1. Become involved with the Water Boards and the State Water Board on the development of Non Point Source Pollution (NPS) regulations on grazing lands.
2. Amend the Water Quality Management Plan that is now obsolete with the new policy direction from the State Water Board.

Henry Giacomini stated that his impression is that RMAC will not be working directly with Lahontan Regional Board. Rather RMAC will focus its efforts with the State Board.

Clancy Dutra volunteered to take the lead on amending the Water Quality Management Plan. Henry Giacomini volunteered to write a letter to organizations represented by RMAC asking for input on laws that pertain to the preservation/sustainability of rangelands.

Ken Zimmerman noted that objectives 1 & 2 above contain both short and long term elements. Both will carry over into the next year. Clancy Dutra noted that it would be useful to get the leadership of groups represented by RMAC together to address the issue of water quality.

Chuck Pritchard posed the question as to what expertise the State Water Board brings to the issue of NPS and rangelands. We should strive to draw a distinction between what is needed and regulation over-kill. Ken Zimmerman stated that RMAC can be of assistance in determining the appropriate level of regulation. Mike Connor expressed his opinion that it will come down to fact that we (RMAC) must come up with our own plan; what we can support.

Discussion on individual Focus groups came to a close. Ken Zimmerman asked that a list of Focus Group objectives be compiled by Jeff Stephens for the next meeting of RMAC. Jeff Stephens agreed.

Clancy Dutra made it known that he wished to resign as Chairman of the Water Focus Group. As a consequence Henry Giacomini was appointed as his replacement by RMAC Chairman Ken Zimmerman.

Item 6, Agency and Association Reports:

United States Forest Service – Brian Garrett reporting:

An overview of fuels treatment by the USFS in the Tahoe Basin was presented. Focus of the treatments is largely protection of water quality. Current conditions are largely due to man's past practices. The area was historically logged, and fire suppression has excluded fire resulting in dense overstocked stands. In 1988 USFS started managing stands. The USFS is currently doing a Fireshed Analysis for the Basin to determine the placement of vegetation treatments. Since 1997, 18,000 acres have been treated in California and 37,000 acres in Nevada.

Mike Connor asked if the diseased trees are being logged. Mr. Garrett stated yes primarily with mechanized harvesters where they can. This is limited by slope.

Ken Zimmerman asked about the relationship of the USFS to Lahontan Water Quality and TRPA (Tahoe Regional Planning Agency). Mr. Garrett stated that it is difficult at times but there has been improvement in working together in recent years. In regards to operations in stream zones there are examples in the basin where the benefits may be shown.

Leonard Hale asked the average time required to complete the environmental assessment process for a project. Brian Garrett responded that it ranges between 1 ½ to 2 years. The USFS has had good success in the Basin in avoiding appeals to their NEPA documents. He further stated that TRPA, Lahontan Water Quality, and the USFS are working on coordinated management plans due in 2007. TMDL modeling is part of this planning process.

Mike Connor asked if project maintenance is part of the project planning process. Mr. Garrett responded stating that an effort is being made for project maintenance. Currently there are about 3,000 acres of USFS project work that is in need of maintenance work. In some cases community groups have assumed this responsibility.

California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection – Mary Huggins reporting:

Ms. Huggins reported that CDF is under contract with the CTC (California Tahoe Conservancy). The mission of the CTC is to preserve water quality within the Basin. CTC is part of the State Resources Agency. She works closely with the CTC providing forestry support to their staff.

New to the Basin is a \$625,000 Prop 40 grant to the CCC (California Conservation Corps) to perform fuel reduction work. Ms. Huggins provides CDF program support and administration for this grant as well as four other Prop 40 grants in the Basin. There is outside pressure to improve fuel conditions in the Basin including support from US congressional leadership.

UC Cooperative Extension, El Dorado Office – Wendy West reporting:

Ms. West explained that much of her experience is with invasive plants, including the Lake Tahoe Weed Management Area. Joint projects with the Federal agencies are underway that allows access to Federal ground. The projects are funded to do detection and eradication.

Ms. West reported that an agreement exists between the UC Cooperative Extension and Lahontan Regional Board to use herbicides under certain infestation thresholds. UC is also working with Nevada to mutual benefit for the prevention of spotted knapweed, dalmatian toad flax, and yellow star thistle.

A primary issue expressed by Ms. West is funding for all programs related to the control of invasive plants. This has become increasingly difficult in California in recent years.

California Fire Safe Council – Bruce Turbeville reporting:

Mr. Turbeville reported that the FSC (Fire Safe Council) was formed in 1993; today there 130 local councils spread throughout the State. The State Council administers the state Clearinghouse which facilitates the delivery of \$3-5 million annually for fuel reduction projects and fire safe projects.

Ken Zimmerman asked how the Department's VMP program may be used in conjunction with the FSC, and not just focused in the WUI (wildland urban interface) areas. Mr. Turbeville responded by stating that the CDF should examine the possibility of combining the objectives of the VMP with FSC, especially in the area of project maintenance.

Mel Thompson posed the question of how do we make FSCs more aware of the resource management aspects of managing the fire problem. Mr. Turbeville responded stating that FSCs are groups of citizens that want to get something done. It is a matter of education by presenting them with information to get your point across.

Henry Giacomini asked if there are potential conflicts between VMP and the FSC objectives. Mr. Turbeville stated that if grant money were diverted from the FSC to VMP that would be a conflict. Other than that there are no conflicts.

Item 7, Committee Reports:

Vegetation management/Fire Focus Group:

J. R. McCollister reminded the committee that the Board has asked for a presentation on RMAC's VMP recommendations. A review of the Executive Summary developed within the Focus group the previous day was also discussed.

Mr. McCollister made the motion for RMAC to accept the Executive Summary as developed by the Focus Group, with revisions to be incorporated by Mike Connor, and distribution of final product to RMAC completed by Jeff Stephens. The Executive Summary will be incorporated within the Report along with a table of contents. The heading "New Commitment to Natural Resources Management" shall be modified where it appears in the report by adding the words, "and the Vegetation Management Program." Motion was seconded and carried by unanimous vote.

Water Focus Group:

Ken Zimmerman asked that Jeff Stephens prepare a letter of thanks to Lahontan Water Quality for hosting the meeting and inviting RMAC to be part of the discussion on NPS. Mr. Stephens agreed.

Chuck Pritchard made the motion that a letter coming from Chairman Dixon be sent to Secretary Chrisman informing him of RMAC's intent to be part of the discussion for developing NPS regulation. Motion carried unanimously.

Item 8, New and Unfinished Business:

Henry Giacomini nominated Ken Zimmerman to continue serving as RMAC Chairman. J.R. McCollister nominated Mike Connor to serve as Vice Chairman. Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned 12:15 PM.